

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 5, 2009

Dr. Robert M. Gates
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Gates:

We write to register concern about the future of the Ground-based Midcourse Defense (GMD) system at Fort Greely, Alaska, and to inform you of our strong support for this system.

As you know, the integrated Ballistic Missile Defense System (BMDS) has been in the news recently. Last week, Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Carl Levin expressed some concern about the BMD system, of which GMD is a key component. His comments came at the same time reports surfaced of North Korea preparing again to test its Taepodong-2 missile, which is estimated to have a range that could hit Alaska. And earlier this week, Iran successfully launched a low-orbit satellite utilizing a three-stage rocket technology, which raises great concern over that country's increased capabilities.

We were sobered by your testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee on January 27, 2009, in which you stated that: "North Korea and Iran present uniquely vexing challenges...North Korea has produced enough plutonium for several atomic bombs; Iran is developing capabilities needed to support a nuclear program...both countries have ballistic missile programs of increasing range and a record of proliferation." Your blunt assessment underscores the need for a fully functioning BMD System, in which Fort Greely plays a key role.

The federal budget includes funding to complete the fielding of all interceptors at Fort Greely to bring the system up to full capacity. Certainly a key component of this system is a more rigorous testing regimen, as stressed in the latest Director of Operational Test & Evaluation (DOT&E) annual report. Additional successful testing will continue to validate this system to the nation and the new administration. Launches for the tests currently originate from the Kodiak Launch Complex in Kodiak, Alaska, which is ideally suited for such testing and ready to execute additional tests.

At this time, we see absolutely no justification for reductions to the GMD System or slowing its implementation. To the contrary, the threats from North Korea and Iran only serve to emphasize the vital role this system should play in the defense of our nation and our state.

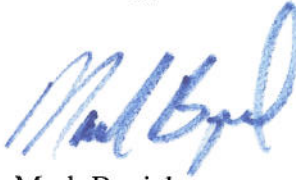
Should the Department of Defense consider any adjustments to this system, we ask that you notify us as soon as possible so that we may discuss the justification with you.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lisa Murkowski".

Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mark Begich".

Mark Begich
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Don Young".

Don Young
Congressman for All Alaska